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BROWNE FAMILY LETTERS.

Communicated to the N. E. HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL REGISTER for October, 1871.

THE following letters have been sent to the REGISTER by Col. Chester, who received them from Rev. W. Rotherham, of Bury St. Edmund's. Mr. Rotherham also kindly furnished a pedigree of the Crofts family, explaining the mode by which these papers have been transmitted to the present day.

JOHN¹ CROFTS, of Rougham, m. 4 July, 1681, Mary Brett, of Drinkstone, and had :—

JOHN,² bap. 27 April, 1682.

WILLIAM,² bap. 26 April, 1683 ; m. Mary —, and had three sons, who d. s. p.

JOHN² CROFTS, m. Judith, daughter of Richard and Judith Browne. He was buried at Rougham, 3 May, 1759. They had :—

JOHN,³ bap. 4 May, 1710, at Barton.

JUDITH,³ m. as per letter.

LYDIA,³ m. “ “ “

JOHN³ CROFTS (the writer of the letter), was a farmer and miller at Rougham ; m. Hannah —, and had :—

JOHN,⁴ bap. 7 Aug., 1735 ; m. but d. s. p.

CHARLES.⁴

LYDIA.

HANNAH.

He was buried at Rougham, 1 June, 1769.

CHARLES⁴ CROFTS, of Drinkstone, m. Mary Winwood, and had :—

JOHN,⁵ m. Mary Levett, had Rougham Mill, and was clerk of the parish, and had one daughter.

CHARLES.⁵

CHARLES,⁵ of Tostock, m. Mary Ann Bristow, and had with three daughters an only son, John⁶ Croft, parish clerk of Tostock, now living, who has been twice married, and by his second wife has two sons John⁷ and Charles,⁷ and one daughter.

This John⁶ Croft has the papers here printed.

In regard to the writer of the letters hence, it is clear that he was Hon. William Browne, of Salem, who was born 7 May, 1709, and who married Mary, daughter of Gov. Burnet. He was of a family ranking high in our colonial aristocracy, his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, having been councillors and assistants. The first of the name here was William¹ Browne, of Salem, an assistant, who died 20 Jan., 1687–8, aged 79, whose two sons Benjamin² and William,² were of the council. William² by his wife Hannah Curwin was father of Col. Samuel³ Browne, who married Abigail, daughter of John Keach, and had William,⁴ the writer of these letters.

In the second volume of the Heraldic Journal will be found an account of the family. According to this pedigree, Simon Browne, of Browne Hall, in Lancashire, went to Brundish in Suffolk, about A.D. 1540, and his widow died there 30 Aug., 1584. Their son Thomas, who died 1 May, 1608, by wife Margaret (who died 1 May, 1605) had Francis Browne, of Weybrid Hall, who died 9 May, 1626. This Francis Browne was the father of

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William the emigrant, and, as the letters show, also father of Richard Browne, of London. It seems that Richard's son Francis had been in New-England for a time, though I fail to identify him with either of the two settlers of Newbury, mentioned by Coffin.

This family of Browne used the following arms, as appears by the tombstone of the emigrant (II. J. ii. 23), and the quartered shield of his gr. grandson, Benjamin Lynde (II. J. iii. 83); on a bend double cotised three eagles displayed: crest, an eagle displayed. These arms are given by Burke to the Brownes of Lancashire. Brundish in Suffolk is four miles north of Framlingham, and at the other extremity of the county, five miles from Clare, is Hawkesdon, whence came another family of Brownes, who are recorded in Bond's *Watertown*, and whose arms are Sable, three square hammers argent.

W. H. W.

1.

London 26th Aug. 1743.

WILLIAM BROWNE, Esq.

SIR,

We wrote you att Large the 23d June, to which referr, since which we have made enquiry after your relation, Mr. Francis Brown, and find he died without issue; his Brother's daughter married one Mr. Crofts, who is likewise dead, but she has left two daughters and one son, to whom the said Francis Brown bequeathed his whole fortune, exclusive of a few small Legacies. Mr. Crofts is now living with the children at St. Edmund's Bury in Suffolk. This is all we can learn of this affair, and hope it will be satisfaction to you, butt if you think we can serve you further therein, you may freely commande, Sir,

Your most humble serv^t

LANE & CASWALL.

[Copy.]

2.

Salem, New-England, April 5th, 1748.

SIR,

The foregoing being a copy of a Letter I rec^d from London in answer to some enquiry I had made after my Relations in Britain, I find by itt you married a niece of Mr. Francis Browne therein mentioned, who was nephew to my great-grandfather, the Hon. William Browne, Esq., who came into this country from Brundish in Suffolk. This Mr. Francis Browne had been in New-England, and kept up a Correspondence with his Cussens, my grandfather and my great-uncle, till the time of their death; but since that I do not find it was continued. Now Sir, as I have a regard for the several Branches of my family, this is to let you know how agreeable to me it would be to have an account from your own hand of the welfare and happiness of yourself and family, with an account likewise of Mr. Richard Browne, of London, the father of Francis, his place of residence, his business of life, and the posterity he left and what has become of them. I hope you will excuse the freedom I now take, and that you'll believe me to be with respect and all proper esteem,

Dear sir, your loving kinsman & most humble Serv^t.

W. BROWNE.

P. S.

I now write Benjamin Browne of Framlingham in Suffolk, your near Kinsman, and have desired him to Correspond with you: Be pleased to direct for Hon^{ble} W^m. Browne, Esq., at Salem in New-England, and desire the favor [of] Messrs. Lane & Caswall to forward itt.

Mr. Crofts of St. Edmund's Bury.

[Copy.]

3.

Salem, N. E. Jan. 1, 1758.

SIR,

The foregoing is a Copy of a letter I wrote you on the 5th Aprill 1748, but apprehend itt never reached your hands, as I have not till this time received an answer to itt. If this should be more successfull, as I am making out the Pedigree of my family, you will oblige me by resolving me the particulars contained in the

foregoing letter, that I may properly insert the posterity of Mr. Richard Browne, the father of Francis, who left his estate to your wife his brother's daughter. Also be so kind as to inform me of the Christian name of your wife's father and of the name of your wife's mother, and your own wife's Christian name, and your children's Christian names with their age, and wheather they are in a Married state. I should be glad you would also let me know of what family of the Crofts you belong to, for I find in anno 1673 there were many of your name in Suffolk; as William, Lord Crofts att Saxham, Sir John Crofts of West Stow, Baronet, John Crofts of Marksham Hall, Gent.: and our Kinsman Mr. Benjamin Browne, of Framlingham, wrote me in 1753, that there was one Esq^{re} Crofts then living in Norfolk whom he did not know, nor any of the name in the County of Suffolk. Mr. Richard Browne, of London, and William Browne, Esq., of Salem, were brothers, and both born at Brundish in Suffolk, and your wife's father and my grandfather were first coussens, and your wife and my father were second coussens, and your children if living and myself are third coussens. It is to perpetuate this relationship that I again take the liberty to write to you, for I have no sinister views, neither do I stand in need of any, and if you or your children see cause to return me an answer to this letter itt will be duly acknowledged by one who would always be pleased to hear you and your family's welfare, and who takes the liberty to subscribe himself,

Your loving kinsman and most Humble serv^e.

WM. BROWNE.

P. S.

Having just inspected some of Mr. Francis Browne's Letters to my grandfather, the following paragraph is extracted from one of them, dated London, Jan. 4, 1689-80. viz:

"I thank God I am still in the Land of the Living, though the last of my father's children; for itt pleased God to take away both my Brother and sister in the prime of their years, so that there is none of my father's family remaining except my brother's children, which are three."

As one of these three children was your wife, if you have any knowledge what became of the other two, and whether they were sons or daughters, be so kind as to let me know it. In the afore mentioned letter Mr. Francis Browne acknowledges the receipt of a Legacy £50.

Mr. — Crofts, of
Bury St. Edmunds.

4.

[JOHN CROFTS to HON. WILLIAM BROWNE.]

Honoured sir,

This is a third Letter sent in answer to the favor of your's dated Salem in New-England, Jan. 1, 1758: in which were copies of two Letters wherein you were pleased to make enquiry after our family and that of Mr. Francis Browne. My father, who died in the summer, made an answer to yours as soon as possible; but he not hearing from you concluded the Letters must be lost by the ships in which they were sent being taken by the French, as it is now a time of war. You may easily, Sir, imagine with what Impatience he waited for the Honour of an answer, and you will, I hope, pardon the trouble I am now giving you in this Letter. It is possible neither of the Letters which my father sent came to your hands, and if so, you are yet uninformed of what you wished to have relating to Mr. Francis Browne, or to his family.

What I have often heard from my father is this: That he knew nothing of Mr. Richard Browne, of London, the father of Mr. Francis Browne. That the brother of Mr. Francis Browne, who was father to my mother, his name was Richard and his wife's name Judith, which was likewise the name of my mother. We are three that are descended from her. Our names are John, Judith, Lydia; all of us married. My children are four, John, Charles, Lydia, Hannah. My state of life is that of a farmer and miller. My two sisters each of them married a farmer.

As to Mr. Francis Browne's estate, I observe in the letter signed Lane and Caswell, it is said Mr. Francis Browne bequeathed to his neice, my mother, the whole of his fortune, except a few legacies; but neither to her nor to my father did he give anything. To myself indeed, and to each of my sisters, he most kindly (for which we shall always reverence his memory), gave by his will a 1000 pounds to be divided equally between us. The remainder of his fortune, which generally reported

was large, he gave to his executrix, Mrs. Bilby, who had lived with him many years, and out of whose hands it was with difficulty and not without great charge, that we did at last get our legacies.


Give me leave Hon^d Sir, to hope for an answer to this, which will be received and remembered with the greatest gratitude by Sir,

Your most obliged Humble Servant,

JOHN CROFTS.

Rougham near Bury,
December, 1759.

Please to direct for me,
the Ram in Bury in Suffolk.



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